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NGC Certifies Rare Wass, Molitor & Co. Gold Coins from the Hungarian National Museum

Posted on 3/12/2018

The coins were submitted by the Hungarian National Museum at NGC's recent on-site grading event in Munich, Germany.

Numismatic Guaranty Corporation® (NGC®) has certified three rare gold coins struck by Wass, Molitor & Co. in the 1850s during the height of the California Gold Rush. The coins were submitted to NGC's office in Munich, Germany, by the Hungarian National Museum, which received the coins from Count Samuel Wass.

A prominent Hungarian, Wass came to the United States in 1849 during Hungary's struggle for independence. (The unsuccessful Hungarian Revolution is so important to the people of Hungary that its start, March 15, is celebrated as a national holiday today.) In 1851, Wass moved to California and partnered with another Hungarian, Count Albert Molitor, to start a gold assay firm in San Francisco: Wass, Molitor & Co.

The firm was among several private assayers that struck coins in California in the 1850s to satisfy the state's desperate need for circulating coinage. Wass, Molitor & Co. issued $5 and $10 gold pieces in 1852 and $10, $20 and $50 gold pieces in 1855. The designs of the coins mirrored official US gold coins but some of the legends were changed. For example, "LIBERTY" was replaced with "W.M. & Co." on the $5, $10 and $20. The $50 gold pieces, which were larger than any circulating US gold coins, featured a wreath on the reverse with the legends "WASS MOLITOR & CO. SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA" around the perimeter.

The opening of the US Branch Mint in San Francisco in 1854, however, reduced

the need for private assayers and their coins, which are called “Territorial Gold Pieces” by collectors. Wass, Molitor & Co. appears to have ceased operations by the end of 1855.

On August 13, 1855, Wass sent four of his coins directly from San Francisco to the Hungarian National Museum:

- An 1852 Large Head $5, now graded NGC Uncirculated;
- An 1852 Wide Date, Large Head $10, now graded NGC MS 63;
- An 1855 $20, missing since 1966 or earlier; and,
- A stunning 1855 $50, now graded NGC MS 63, which ranks as the second-finest example certified by NGC.

1855 Wass, Molitor & Co. $50, graded NGC MS 63.
Click images to enlarge.

1852 Wass, Molitor & Co. Wide Date, Large Head $10, graded NGC MS 63.
Click images to enlarge.

1852 Wass, Molitor & Co. Large Head $5, graded NGC Uncirculated.
Click images to enlarge.

NGC graded the coins during its first on-site grading event at its office in Munich. The coins were encapsulated in NGC's special Museum Holders, which were originally developed for the Smithsonian Institution and can be opened along the edge to allow the museum to examine the coins outside of the holder. NGC's certification labels describe the coin, its grade and its illustrious pedigree.

"These coins bring history alive in a truly remarkable way, connecting us with two pivotal moments in American and Hungarian history," says Mark Salzberg, NGC Chairman and one of the graders who evaluated the coins in Munich. "I am

honored that the Hungarian National Museum chose NGC to grade these important rarities, and I am thrilled that our presence in Munich gave us such an opportunity.”

The decision to certify these coins began when Dr. Csaba Tóth, curator of the Hungarian National Museum, contacted Arthur L. Friedberg, a respected numismatic author. Mr. Friedberg referred Dr. Tóth to Douglas Mudd, the curator of the American Numismatic Association (ANA) Edward C. Rochette Money Museum. Mr. Mudd then introduced Dr. Tóth to NGC, which has previously certified coins from the ANA's collection. NGC is the official grading service of the ANA.

"This was the first time in its 200-year history that the museum chose to have coins from its numismatic collection graded," said Dr. Tóth. "As a result, we've put coins from our public collection in the spotlight. Hopefully, this will make people realize how many rare and high-grade coins are 'hidden' in museums, waiting to be discovered. I hope that this fruitful cooperation with NGC can be continued with other spectacular coins from our collection."

About the Coin Cabinet at the Hungarian National Museum

The Coin Cabinet of the Hungarian National Museum houses one of the museum’s primary collections. The third oldest museum in Europe was established by Count Ferenc Széchényi in 1802 as he donated his library, including his coin collection of 2,675 pieces, to the Hungarian nation. At present, both within and in addition to the four major collections — ancient (Greek, Celtic, Roman and Byzantine) coins, Hungarian and foreign coins, medals and paper currency (banknotes and securities) — numerous larger or smaller collection groups have arisen, such as the collections of Oriental (including Chinese and Islamic) coins, badges, awards, decorations and dies. Today, the archives lists about 350,000 objects in about 60 inventory books, ranging from primitive forms of money such as cowry shells, bronze bracelets and silver bars through the coins of the ancient, medieval and modern periods to the securities and banking cards issued in modern times. In the course of the past 200 years, the Numismatic Collection, through its collections, books and colleagues, has been a primary research center in Hungarian numismatics. To learn more, go to mnm.hu/en/collections/coins-collection

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United States

NGC Special Label for Breast Cancer Awareness Coins

Posted on 3/12/2018

The coins include the first "pink gold" coins ever issued by the United States. Scroll below to learn how you can receive NGC's distinctive Pink Holder for these coins.

The US Mint has announced that the 2018 Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coins will go on sale March 15. Six different versions will be released: uncirculated and proof clad half dollars, struck in Denver and San Francisco; uncirculated and proof silver dollars, struck in Philadelphia; and uncirculated and proof gold five dollars, struck at West Point.

2018 Breast Cancer Awareness Coins in NGC's standard white holder
Click image to enlarge.

Notably, the gold five dollars coins are the first "pink gold" coins ever issued by the United States. The coins are made from a composition that gives them a pink hue, a color that represents breast cancer awareness.

The obverse of the Breast Cancer Awareness coins depicts two women with a butterfly flying above. That butterfly, a symbol of hope, is also featured prominently on the coin's reverse. The NGC special label reflects this theme.

The Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Act instructs the US Mint to collect a surcharge for each coin that it sells that will be paid to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, a New York-based charity dedicated to breast cancer research. (The US Mint surcharges are $5 for each half dollar, $10 for each silver dollar and $35 for each five dollar.)

NGC will honor the Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coins by encapsulating them with its inspirational label for no additional fee.

For an additional $5 per coin fee, submitters can choose to have their Breast Cancer Awareness coins encapsulated in NGC's distinctive Pink Holder, which further enhances the presentation of these coins. This request **must** be noted on the NGC Submission Form.

2018 Breast Cancer Awareness Coins in NGC's special Pink Holder
Click image to enlarge.

Coins received by NGC within the first 30 days of their release are eligible for NGC's popular **Early Releases®** and **First Releases®** designations. Learn more about Early Releases and First Releases here. For Early Releases / First Releases cutoff dates, click here. Scroll below to see detailed submission instructions.

Submission Instructions:

- Submit the 2018 Breast Cancer Awareness coins under the **Modern** grading

tier or higher.

- The Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Label #991 (shown below) will be included by default for no additional fee:

- If Early Releases or First Releases is desired (+$10), select **Early Releases** or **First Releases**. The default label is the Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Label #991. If you want the Early Releases or First Releases label (shown below), write **Blue Early Releases Label #378** or **Blue First Releases Label #379** on your submission form:

- To qualify for Early Releases or First Releases, coins must be received by NGC or an NGC-approved Depository before the Early Releases/First Releases cutoff date.

- If you do not want an Early Releases or First Releases designation, and do not want the Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Label or an applicable mint label, you may request the Standard Brown label (shown below), for no additional charge, by writing **NGC Standard Brown Label #377** on the submission form. If no label is requested, you will receive the Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Label.

- If you would like the NGC Pink Holder for an additional $5 per coin fee, write "**Pink Holder**" in bold letters on the NGC Submission Form. This request applies to all coins on the form. Breast Cancer Awareness coins submitted for the NGC Pink Holder must be submitted on a separate submission form.

- The NGC Pink Holder will be used with the NGC Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Label by default. It may also be used with the Blue Early Releases label, Blue First Releases label or Standard Brown label by request.

- If you would like Mint packaging returned, select “Return Mint Packaging” in section 3 of the NGC Submission Form. The fee is $5 plus the cost of shipping.

- Please note that NGC’s First Day of Issue designation is available for qualifying bulk submissions only.

Questions? Contact NGC Customer Service at service@NGCcoin.com or 1-800-NGC-COIN (1-800-642-2646).

Dealers should contact Miles Standish at Miles@NGCcoin.com or 949-922-0515 or Scott Heller at SHeller@NGCcoin.com for bulk submissions.

Collectors Society paid members can submit their coins directly to NGC. Not an NGC Collectors Society member? Paid memberships start at just $25/year. Join today.

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Patriotic Civil War Tokens: 10 Common Designs for Your Cabinet

Posted on 3/13/2018

Patriotic Civil War tokens have over 500 different "stock" dies not relating to any specific merchant.

There are well over 10,000 varieties of Civil War tokens, which were issued from April 1861, to April of 1865. During the war, the public hoarded silver and gold coins, and by 1862, had began hoarding the small change as well. Daily commerce became difficult, and merchants were forced to find substitutes, quickly adopting small cent-size tokens for small change. Most are about the size of a typical penny, but range from 18-25mm in diameter.

Civil War tokens are generally divided into three categories: Patriotics, Store Cards, and Sutler tokens. While there are over 1,500 merchants who had tokens made with their name or business featured, tokens could also be purchased from manufacturers with universal designs. Because the cost of copper in these tokens was far less than a cent, manufacturers could make nice profits, and typically charged $9 for 1,000 tokens. By 1864, that cost had decreased to as low as $7.50 for the same quantity.

Patriotic Civil War tokens is the category of Civil War tokens that contains over 500 different "stock" dies not relating to any specific merchant. These dies were combined to form many different die-parings, and were struck in a variety of metal

types. Many have a bust on the obverse, like that of the French liberty head, Indian head, or George Washington, and a slogan within a wreath on the reverse, such as “NOT ONE CENT” or “ARMY & NAVY.” Patriotics were mostly made in support of the North, but a few, like “THE WEALTH OF THE SOUTH” supported the South.

Many of these dies are easily obtained, and are relatively inexpensive, even in higher grades. They can even be purchased for as little as $20 in respectable condition. For Patriotics, there are about 2,000 varieties known, when including the various metal types for each die combination. Below is a selection of 10 common but classic designs for Patriotic Civil War tokens that should be in every serious collector’s cabinet.

10. Fuld-225/327 a, The Federal Union – Army and Navy

Fuld-225/327 a, The Federal Union - Army and Navy
Click images to enlarge

Many of the slogans engraved were strong patriotic statements, such as “NO COMPROMISE WITH TRAITORS” and “CONSTITUTION FOR EVER.” There are actually 10 different varieties of the obverse die, which are mostly combined with different “ARMY AND NAVY” reverses. These varieties are best distinguished by looking at where the “P’ in “PRESERVED,” the “I” in “IT” and the right flower align with the outer letters. One of the designs mistakenly says “BY” instead of “BE.” The above specimen is readily identified by the wider last “N” in “UNION.” The saying featured was first used by Andrew Jackson when Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina threatened to push for the secession of his state from the union.

9. Fuld-254/255 a, Money Makes the Mare Go – Knickerbocker Currency

Fuld-254/255 a, Money Makes the Mare Go – Knickerbocker Currency
Click images to enlarge

A die sinker named WM. H. Bridgens of New York is responsible for the above dies. He also manufactured the popular McClellan die (138) and the “FOR PUBLIC ACCOMODATION” die (37). The obverse features a striding man with a sack of coins spilling behind his back, with a ribbon coming from his mouth saying “GO IT BUTTONS.” This may refer to the competition between certain contractors who supplied the union during the war, which was a major controversy at the time. The phrase “MONEY MAKES THE MARE GO” is from a 16th century British nursery rhyme, and “BUTTONS” is likely a classic name for a horse, just like people name their dogs “Fifi” today.

8. Fuld-163/352 a, Union – Crossed Canons

Fuld-163/352 a, Union – Crossed Canons
Click images to enlarge

The crossed canons reverse die has always been popular with collectors, despite being one of the most common dies. The piece calls to mind the first war of 1776, the revolution that built the great American nation, and compares its significance to the “War of 1861” which will preserve it—which is a common phrase featured

on other pieces. The liberty cap, a symbol of the freedom and the revolution, is present as well.

7. Fuld-127/248 a, Lincoln – OK

Fuld-127/248 a, Lincoln – OK
Click images to enlarge

With election of 1864 came many Civil War tokens featuring Abraham Lincoln and his opponent, General G.B. McClellan, who was well-loved by the army. Collectors today go crazy over anything that features Lincoln, and this piece is no different. At a Rarity-3 (501-2,000 in existence), this piece is less common than the others on this list, and also more pricy. Worn examples regularly sell for over $100, and nicer ones go for several hundred or more.

6. Fuld-209/414 a, The Flag of Our Union – Shoot Him on the Spoot

Fuld-209/414 a, The Flag of Our Union – Shoot Him on the Spoot
Click images to enlarge

There are 12 different obverse varieties for the “FLAG OF OUR UNION” tokens, which are paired with 10 different “SHOOT HIM ON THE SPOT” reverses as well

as a few “ARMY AND NAVY” reverses. The one pictured above is especially sought by collectors because of the hilarious error, “SPOOT” instead of “SPOT.”

5. Fuld-189/399 a, Draped Flags – Star of David

Fuld-189/399 a, Draped Flags – Star of David
Click images to enlarge

This is another popular design among collectors, and is readily available in high grades. Jewish collectors are especially enthused because of the attractive Star of David gracing the reverse. The obverse design is attributed to Scovill Manufacturing Co. in Waterbury, CT, which was founded in 1802, and was acquired by The Gores Group in 2006. George and Melvin Fuld studied the firm’s collection of tokens, and many are well struck, despite having high relief.

4. Fuld-174/272 a, Washington Equestrian Statue – Union for Ever

Fuld-174/272 a, Washington Equestrian Statue – Union for Ever
Click images to enlarge

Also likely a Scovill product, this piece features a statue of the foremost founding father—George Washington—on horseback with his arm outstretched. There are

5 different varieties of the obverse. The statue is known as the “Virginia Washington Monument,” and located in the public square in Richmond, which was ironically the location of the inauguration of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. The monument is 60 feet tall and the bronze statue on top weighs 18,000 pounds. It was erected in 1858 but wasn’t finished until after the conclusion of the Civil War.

3. Fuld-259/445 a, Trade and Commerce – Coppers 20 Percent Premium

Fuld-259/445 a, Trade and Commerce – Coppers 20 Percent Premium
Click images to enlarge

The Trade and Commerce token is a bit beefier than most Civil War tokens because of its 22mm (rather than the normal 19mm) diameter and generous thickness. It was issued by John Gault of New York, who was a well-known seller of encased postage stamps which also circulated at the time. Since merchants found the copper tokens more durable, they became the standard currency. Nearly all were well-struck, and many come well-preserved, and can be found in almost full-red state.

2. Fuld-136/397 a, Andrew Jackson – Serpent

Fuld-136/397 a, Andrew Jackson – Serpent
Click images to enlarge

Andrew Jackson is featured on a couple of Civil War tokens likely because of his staunch federalism and hardnose policies. The reverse is particularly provocative, featuring a serpent with “BEWARE” inscribed above. The *Civil War Token Journal* from winter 2004 says it’s likely a copperhead snake, and serves as a “warning to northern Confederate sympathizers to watch their step and get their act together.” However, the copperhead movement was actually a faction of Democrats in the North who opposed the war, wanting a peace settlement with the Confederates. Some of these “copperheads” were actually arrested for “declaring sympathy for the enemy” and were not considered patriotic. Therefore the snake is more likely a rattlesnake, which invokes the phrase “don’t tread on me.” The symbol dates back to colonial times, which warns people not to take advantage of Americans or they will strike.

1. Fuld-237/423 a, Monitor – Wreath & Anchor

Fuld-237/423 a, Monitor – Wreath & Anchor
Click images to enlarge

So much could be written on the Monitor, and its famous battle with Merrimac that the subject really deserves its own article in the context of numismatics. The invention of usable ironclad ships not dependent on wind power was one of the greatest advancements in naval history. The idea of rotating turrets and shells bouncing harmlessly off hulls armored with iron plates was terrifying to sailors at the time. This design has long been endeared by collectors for its beauty and historical significance—so enthusiasts can be thankful it is a common piece. An uncirculated example can still be purchased for under $200. Along with the tokens of the Monitor, many other numismatic items related to the ships and battle are catalogued in David Schenkman’s *Tokens & Medals Commemorating the Battle between the Monitor and Merrimack*.

Fuld-239/422 a, Monitor – Wreath & Anchor
NGC MS 64 BN*Click images to enlarge*

George Fuld and his son, Melvin, are largely responsible for the rise in popularity of Civil War tokens during the 1960s. Their research and published references have become the standard for the hobby. Their reference *Patriotic Civil War Tokens*, 5th Edition, provides the best listing for Patriotic Civil War tokens.

The value of Patriotics depends on many factors, including rarity, design, issuer, and metal type. While the majority were struck in copper, they were also made in off-metal types such as brass, silver, white metal, copper-nickel, and German-silver. A few examples were issued plated, but many Civil War tokens were also plated in 20th century, so collectors should be wary.

Because these off-metal types command a premium, the specialists at NGC will often use expensive metallurgic X-ray analysis technology to verify metal types. Because counterfeits exist, it is always safer to purchase tokens certified by NGC, which is responsible for certifying well over 15,000 Patriotics, and 25,000 Civil War Store Cards. NGC first started certifying these around 2003, and has gained a solid reputation in the exonumia community for certified tokens and medals. NGC has also collaborated with the Civil War Token Society to assist with published resources.

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NGC Expands VarietyPlus Service to World Coins

Posted on 3/2/2018

The expansion includes a major upgrade to NGC's free online variety attribution resource, which is now optimized for smartphones and tablets.

Numismatic Guaranty Corporation® (NGC®) has announced that it has expanded its popular VarietyPlus® variety attribution service to world coins, effective March 1, 2018. NGC launched VarietyPlus in 1996 to provide accurate attribution services for US coin varieties. A variety is a coin that is distinguished by characteristics specific to the dies that struck it.

Many varieties are highly collectible and can sell for multiples of other coins with the same date and mintmark combination. For example, the price for a 1942/1 Mercury Dime, a variety where the 2 in the date is punched over a 1, can be several hundred times more than the price for a 1942 Mercury Dime without the overdate.

1942/41 Mercury dime variety

Varieties include overdates and over-mintmarks, repunched dates and repunched mintmarks, doubled dies and coins with other distinctive die-specific features. Many varieties have been extensively studied and cataloged in specialized reference books. Ambitious collectors might seek to obtain not just one example of each date issued, but one example of each known variety. For example, collectors of Early American Large Cents often try to collect one example of each Sheldon variety—varieties that were originally cataloged by Dr. William Sheldon.

NGC attributes varieties that it considers to be significant and widely collected under its VarietyPlus program. More than 10,000 varieties are now attributed by NGC, all of them listed in its online resource located at NGCcoin.com/VarietyPlus. This resource has been recently updated to be easier to search and use on smartphone and tablets.

Certain variety attributions are performed by NGC automatically for no additional charge, while others require a request and an additional $15 fee. Visit NGCcoin.com/VarietyPlus prior to submitting to confirm whether your coin is an eligible variety and, if so, whether it requires a request and an additional $15 fee.

1999 Silver 10 Yuan Panda varieties in the lettering of the date

"NGC's VarietyPlus program provides collectors and dealers with a more nuanced coin description that can often add interest and value," says Rick Montgomery, NGC President. "The expansion to world coins supports NGC's position as the market leader in world coin certification services."

If your coin is a variety recognized by NGC on request, select the "VarietyPlus" add-on service on the NGC Submission Form and check the "VarietyPlus" box next to the appropriate coin. If you know the coin's variety, you can enter it in the space provided, but that is not required. In all cases, NGC will verify the attribution and, if the variety is recognized by NGC, print the attribution on the NGC certification label.

If your coin is a variety that is not currently recognized by NGC, you can send high resolution images of it to NGC Customer Service at Service@NGCcoin.com to find out whether it might be eligible in the future. Determination of recognized varieties and the appropriate attribution is at NGC's sole discretion. NGC expects many more world coin varieties will be added to its VarietyPlus program and online resource over time.

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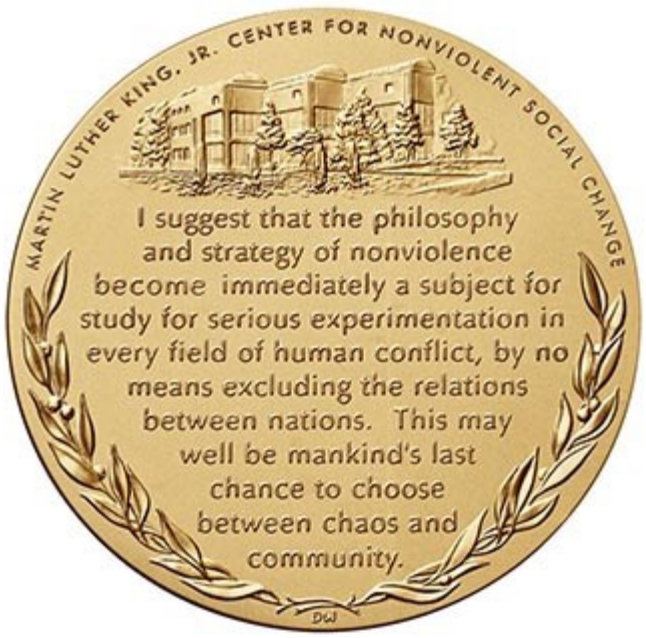
United States

Paying Tribute to Women and Coins in March

Posted on 3/30/2018

NGC has selected 31 coins showing women's impact on coinage throughout history.

March is Women's History Month, and NGC celebrated the occasion with 31 coins and medals showing the impact of women on coinage throughout history. Here is the complete list:


MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CENTER FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE
I suggest that the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence become immediately a subject for study for serious experimentation in every field of human conflict, by no means excluding the relations between nations. This may well be mankind's last chance to choose between chaos and community.
DWJ

Click images to enlarge.

March 31

The coin: 2004 Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King Bronze Medal

The woman: Coretta Scott King

The story: Coretta Scott King, an Alabama native, married Martin Luther King Jr. in 1953, the year before he became full-time pastor in Montgomery, Alabama. With her husband, she was active in the Civil Rights Movement, and became a target with him: Their home was shot at and bombed. When her husband was assassinated in Tennessee in 1968, she balanced the tasks of receiving

condolences, meeting dignitaries, leading a march her husband had intended to carry out, and caring for their four children during the funeral services. She went on to create the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta and helped secure her husband's birthday in January as an annual federal holiday.

Further reading: US Mint: 2004 Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King Bronze Medal

Click images to enlarge.

March 30

The coin: 1999-W Washington $5 gold proof

The woman: Laura Gardin Fraser

The story: Laura Gardin Fraser was the first woman to design a coin for the US Treasury: the 1921 Alabama Centennial Half Dollar. She went on to design others, including the 1922 Grant Half Dollar and Dollar, as well as the obverse of the 1937 Oregon Trail Silver Half Dollar (while her husband, Buffalo nickel designer James Earle Fraser, designed the reverse). But her biggest brush with fame in American coinage came in 1931, when she submitted the winning design for the new Washington quarter. Though a panel of judges recommended her design, the Treasury secretary chose another design, which is still in use today. When a coin was authorized to mark the bicentennial of Washington's death, her winning design was finally given a place of honor.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: 1999-W Washington $5 gold proof

Click images to enlarge. (Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions)

March 29

The coin: Byzantine Empire Gold Tetarteron Nomisma (11th Century A.D.)

The woman: Mary, mother of Jesus

The story: In its millennium of existence until A.D. 1453, the Byzantine Empire had Christianity as its official religion, and Christian symbolism is common on its coinage. Depicted on the obverse of this coin is Mary, whose life was intertwined with that of her Son, from his birth in Bethlehem to his death at Calvary. She is specifically linked to the Wedding at Cana early in Jesus' ministry, in which she prompts him to turn water into wine, according to the account in the Gospel of John. Early in Christianity, Mary was revered as "Theotokos" (Mother of God). She also has an elevated position in Islam as the only woman mentioned by name in the Qu'ran.

Further reading: Byzantine Rulers You Can Collect

Click images to enlarge.

March 28

The coin: The 1893 Isabella Quarter

The woman: Queen Isabella of Spain

The story: The marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand set the stage of the unification of Spain, and their sponsorship of Christopher Columbus' voyage in 1492 laid the groundwork for the Spanish Empire. In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago celebrated Columbus' achievement four centuries earlier. Mrs. Potter Palmer, a member of the Board of Lady Managers of the Exposition, pushed for a commemorative coin with a female motif, and Queen Isabella was chosen for a quarter dollar. Unfortunately, it was overshadowed at the time by the Columbus half dollar (both were sold for a dollar), but as a result, the Isabella commemorative is rarer today, and consequently more prized by collectors.

Further reading: Coin Explorer: 1893 Isabella Quarter

Click images to enlarge.

March 27

The coin: 1994-W Women's Veterans Commemorative Silver Dollar

The woman: Female veterans of World War II

The story: Though women today can enroll for combat roles in United States armed forces, that was not the case during World War II. Still, hundreds of thousands of U.S. women served in the armed forces, many in nursing roles. A civilian organization, Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), provided female pilots for essential noncombat roles; for their achievements, they were awarded veteran status in 1977. The obverse of this particular coin recognizes women's contributions during World War II in service to what became all five branches of the US military; the reverse features the design for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.

Further reading: US Mint: 1994-W Women's Veterans Commemorative Silver Dollar

Click images to enlarge.

March 26

The coin: 1795 Draped Bust Dollar

The woman: Ann Willing Bingham

The story: The Draped Bust design debuted on the US dollar in 1795, and by 1796 also appeared on the half dime, dime, quarter and half dollar. The basis of the matronly portrait on the obverse is believed to be Ann Willing Bingham, a socialite in Philadelphia (then the fledgling nation's capital). Her father was Thomas Willing, the president of the First Bank of the United States. She was not only regarded as one of the most beautiful women of that time, but she also had a keen intellect, corresponding with Thomas Jefferson about how to ensure individual freedoms.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: Early Dollars

Click images to enlarge.

March 25

The coin: 2016 Macedonia Mother Teresa silver 100 dinar

The woman: Mother Teresa

The story: Anjeze Gonxhe Bojaxhiu was born in modern-day Macedonia in 1910 and left home at age 18 to pursue life as a missionary. In 1929, she arrived in India and took her solemn vows as a nun in 1937. Feeling a calling to focus her ministry on serving the poor, in 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity, an organization that today includes thousands of nuns. She was given the Nobel Peace Prize In 1979. Following her canonization in 2016, she is now regarded by Catholics as Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

Further reading: Nobel Prize profile of Mother Teresa

Click images to enlarge.

March 24

The coin: 1992 Wu Zetian Series IX Gold 100 Yuan

The woman: Wu Zetian

The story: Wu Zetian (also known as Empress Wu) holds the distinction of being the only empress regnant of China. Starting in A.D. 660, she wielded considerable power after her husband, Emperor Gaozong, suffered a stroke. She is remembered for expanding China's territory while aggressively guarding her own political power. In 1690, she established the short-lived Zhou Dynasty, which lasted from 690 to 705, when she was forced to abdicate; several months later she died at the age of 80 or 81.

Click images to enlarge.

March 23

The coin: 2014-W Eleanor Roosevelt Gold $10 Proof

The woman: Phebe Hemphill

The story: Phebe Hemphill has been a sculptor-engraver for the US Mint since 2006. Her sculpting credits include several First Spouse obverses, including Eleanor Roosevelt (2014), Jacqueline Kennedy (2015) and suffragette Alice Paul (who was given the spot reserved for the spouse of Chester A. Arthur, a widower president). Hemphill's work is also seen on everyday American currency, including designing and sculpting the reverses of America the Beautiful quarters for Arizona, New Hampshire, Oregon and Virginia, as well as sculpting the America the Beautiful reverses for California, Delaware, New Mexico and Pennsylvania.

Further reading: Phebe Hemphill

Click images to enlarge. (Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions)

March 22

The coin: Roman Empire Gold Aureus (1st Century A.D.)

The woman: Livia, wife of Roman Emperor Augustus

The story: Livia is shown on the reverse of this Roman coin issued by her son, the Emperor Tiberius (A.D. 14 to 37). She appears as the embodiment of Pax, meaning peace. She lived from 58 BC to A.D. 29, and in 38 B.C. married Octavius, the man who a decade later would assume the name Augustus and become Rome's first emperor. Like Octavius, Livia had been previously married, and she brought into new marriage a three-year-old son, Tiberius, and her yet-unborn son, Nero Claudius Drusus. She and Augustus were married more than half a century, during which time he granted Livia considerable power. Upon his death in A.D. 14, he gave her the title Augusta (empress). This allowed her to maintain influence even as her son Tiberius, the next emperor, grew weary of her involvement.

Click images to enlarge.

March 21

The coin: 1985B India 20 Rupees Proof

The woman: Indira Gandhi

The story: Indira Gandhi was the daughter (and only child) of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. She held that position herself from 1966 to 1977, and again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. One of the world's first elected female leaders, she led the world's second-most-populous nation, which at the time had over half a billion people. Initially seen as a puppet for others, she eventually achieved a commanding presence within India's political world.

Click images to enlarge.

March 20

The coin: 1983 Russia Rouble

The woman: Valentina Tereshkova

The story: Though the US won the Space Race by putting a man on the moon in 1969, it was the Russians who claimed some of the early milestones in space exploration. These include putting the first person in space (Yuri Gagarin, April 1961), as well as putting the first woman in space two years later. In June 1963, Valentinina Tereshkova orbited the Earth 48 times over nearly three days in her Vostok 6 capsule. It wasn't for another 20 years that the first American woman, Sally Ride, went to space on the shuttle Challenger. At age 70, Tereshkova said she would like to go to Mars; today, she is still alive at age 81.

Click images to enlarge.

March 19

The coin: 1916-S Mercury Dime

The woman: Elsie Kachel Stevens

The story: Elsie Kachel Stevens was the wife of poet Wallace Stevens, who was

honored with the Pulitzer Prize in 1955, near the end of his life. Her claim to fame derives from 1913, when she and her husband were renting an apartment from sculptor Adolph Weinman. Weinman made a bust of her, which later served as the model for the figure on the obverse of the “Mercury” dime. Minted for three decades starting in 1916, the Mercury dime today is one of the American coin series most loved by collectors. Though commonly believed to show the Roman god Mercury, the image on the obverse is actually Liberty wearing a winged cap.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: Mercury Dime

Click images to enlarge.

March 18

The coin: 2015 British 5 Pound World War I commemorative

The woman: Edith Cavell

The story: Edith Cavell was a British nurse who worked during World War I in Belgium, which was overrun by German forces in 1914. Cavell worked to treat injured soldiers from both sides, and helped dozens of British and French soldiers reach freedom. She was arrested in August 1915 and tried by German forces. Her execution by firing squad in October 1915 caused international outcry. Today, she is venerated by the Church of England. She also has a memorial in London, with a quote from the night before her execution: “Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness for anyone.”

Click images to enlarge.

March 17

The coin: 1997 Argentina 1 Peso

The woman: Eva Duarte de Peron

The story: Eva Duarte de Peron, often referred to as “Evita,” was first lady of Argentina from 1946 until her death from cervical cancer in 1952, at age 33. She pushed for women’s suffrage in Argentina, which was granted in 1947 (and celebrated on this coin). She also encouraged women to get involved in politics by establishing the Female Peronist Party. From a modest background herself, she established the Evan Peron Foundation in 1948, which helped the less fortunate. In 1951, she was seriously considered for the vice-presidential candidacy as her husband sought re-election, but she ultimately renounced those ambitions. After her husband was re-inaugurated in June 1952 (and shortly before her death), she was given the title of “Spiritual Leader of the Nation.”

Click images to enlarge.

March 16

The coin: 2012 Gold 2,000 Yuan Panda

The woman: Chang Huan

The story: As part of our Women and Coins series, we are honoring women who have found success in the traditionally male-dominated field of coin design. Chang Huan, an artist in China, has designed some spectacular coins for that country's popular Panda series. These include the 2012 Gold 2,000 Panda seen here, featuring a playful example of the animal that serves as a symbol of China. Her work also includes the 2006 1-ounce silver 10 Yuan, and heart-shaped Pandas of recent years.

Further reading: Panda Designers Speak with NGC's Peter Anthony

Click images to enlarge. (Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions)

March 15

The coin: Parthian Kingdom Silver Drachm (2 B.C. to A.D. 4)

The woman: Musa, Queen of Parthia

The story: Musa and her son, the Parthian King Phraataces, are portrayed on this coin. Musa started life as a slave girl in the Roman Empire and was gifted as a concubine to Phraates IV (c.38 to 2 B.C.), ruler of the rival Parthian Kingdom (centered in modern day Iran). Musa eventually gave birth to a son, Phraataces, after which she was hailed queen and the boy designated the king's royal successor (as his other sons were sent to Rome as hostages). Later, in 2 B.C., Musa and her son poisoned Phraates IV, after which Phraataces became king in his place. Shockingly, Musa married her son, the new king, and their rule lasted about six years until they were overthrown.

Click images to enlarge.

March 14

The coin: 2012 US Aung San Suu Kyi Bronze Medal

The woman: Aung San Suu Kyi

The story: In 2012, the US Mint produced bronze medals honoring democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 amid her struggle against the regime in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. The medal's obverse features Suu Kyi's portrait, while the reverse features a peacock surrounded by the words "Dedicated to Promoting Freedom and Democracy in Burma." She was kept under house arrest by the military regime for most of the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century. In the past decade, as Myanmar has become increasingly democratic, Suu Kyi has gained political power, and now serves as foreign minister.

Further reading: US Mint: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Bronze Medal

Click images to enlarge.

March 13

The coin: 1979 Susan B. Anthony Dollar

The woman: Susan B. Anthony

The story: In 1979, Susan B. Anthony became the first real woman to be featured on a US coin. (Unfortunately, the coin resembled a quarter and not particularly successful.) Anthony co-founded the Women's Loyal National League in 1863, the country's first national women's political group, which collected nearly 400,000 signatures in a successful drive for a constitutional amendment to outlaw slavery. Later, Anthony helped lead the effort in the US to give women the right to vote. After being arrested for voting in 1872, she was key in presenting Congress with an amendment to protect the right of women to vote in 1878. This right was enshrined in the Nineteenth Amendment, though it wasn't approved until 1920, 14 years after Anthony's death.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: Susan B. Anthony Dollar

Click images to enlarge.

March 12

The coin: 1921 US Peace Dollar

The woman: Teresa de Francisci

The story: The successor to the Morgan Dollar was the Peace Dollar, which came into being in 1921 (after the horror of World War I) and was discontinued in 1935. In 1921, a US commission invited a small group of accomplished sculptors to provide designs for a new silver dollar to represent peace. The competition was fierce, and included Victor David Brenner (Lincoln cent), Adolph Weinman (Mercury dime) and John Flanagan (Washington quarter), but the victor was Anthony de Francisci. Because of time constraints, de Francisci turned to his wife, Teresa de Francisci, as the model for Liberty, depicted with a radiant crown and wind-blown hair. They were newlyweds at the time; both arrived in the United States as immigrants from Italy.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: US Peace Dollar

Click images to enlarge.

March 11

The coin: 2016 “Joan of Arc” silver 10 Euros, proof

The woman: Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc)

The story: A powerful figure in medieval France during the Hundred Years War, Joan of Arc was a teenager from a peasant family when she proclaimed that she had received visions from saints directing her to drive the English out. The morale boost she provided to French forces was key to helping break the siege of Orleans in 1429, as well as subsequent victories that paved the way for Charles VII’s rule as king of France until 1461. Joan wasn’t so fortunate: She was captured by the English and burned at the stake as a heretic in 1431, at the age of 19. The Roman Catholic Church canonized her in 1920, and she remains a national heroine of France.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA • E PLURIBUS UNUM
"AS WE HOPE FOR THE BEST IN THEM, HOPE IS REBORN IN US."
EUNICE KENNEDY SHRIVER, FOUNDER
ONE DOLLAR

Click images to enlarge.

March 10

The coin: 1995-W Silver Dollar Special Olympics Commemorative
The woman: Eunice Kennedy Shriver
The story: The sister of President John F. Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy Shriver helped found the Special Olympics in 1968, directing funding to a Chicago event that was the brainchild of Anne Burke. Today, the worldwide organization provides enriching opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities through sport competition. For her lifelong efforts, Shriver received a Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Reagan in 1984 and a papal knighthood in 2006. Shriver didn't pass away until 2009, so her appearance on a US coin in 1995 was extraordinary, and generated some controversy. The reverse of the coin features a quote attributed to Shriver: "As we hope for the best in them, hope is reborn in us."
Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: 1995-W Silver Dollar Special Olympics Commemorative

Click images to enlarge.

March 9
The coin: 1986-W Liberty $5 Proof (Modern US Commemorative)
The woman: Elizabeth Jones
The story: The rebirth of the commemorative coins in the US had just begun when the US marked the centennial of the dedication of the Statue of Liberty with commemorative coins, including a gold half eagle, which features a well-received design by Jones. From 1981 to 1991, Jones was the 11th chief engraver of the US Mint, the first woman to hold that position. Among her other designs is the 1983 Los Angeles Olympic dollar commemorative.
Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: 1986-W Liberty $5 Proof

Click images to enlarge. (Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions)

March 8

The coin: Roman Empire AE3 or BI Nummus (4th Century A.D.)

The woman: Helena, mother of Constantine the Great

The story: Helena is portrayed on the obverse of this coin. She is also seen on the reverse, styled as Securitas, the Roman goddess of security and stability. Helena is renowned for her influence on her son, Constantine the Great, who was Roman Emperor from 306 to 337. She served as Augusta (or empress) from 325 until her death a few years later. A Christian who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land late in her life, Helena is revered as a saint in Catholic and Orthodox churches. Though Constantine was a pagan most of his life, his reign was marked by increased acceptance of Christianity within the Roman Empire.

Click images to enlarge.

March 7

The coin: 1962 Nigeria Shilling

The woman: Queen Elizabeth II

The story: Queen Elizabeth II is world-renowned for leaving her personal stamp

of dignity on her 66-year (and counting) reign, the longest of any British monarch. She is 91 years old, and has ruled since her father, King George VI, died when she was 25 years old. In addition to being queen of the United Kingdom, she also serves as the queen of the Commonwealth realms of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a dozen other countries formerly part of the British Empire. Though her power is ceremonial, her likeness remains on many of those countries' coins to this day. Her likeness can also be found on other coins, such as the 1962 Nigeria Shilling here, minted just after Nigeria attained its independence from British rule, part of the wave of decolonization after World War II.

Further reading: About Her Majesty The Queen

Click images to enlarge.

March 6

The coin: France 1984 Marie Curie 100 Francs (the one pictured has ESSAI on the obverse, French for "test")

The woman: Marie Curie

The story: Scientist Marie Curie, who was born in Poland but spent most of her adult years in France, is renowned for her research with radioactive materials. She won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1903 with her husband Pierre, and won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1911 as a widow. She was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, and the first person to win two Nobel Prizes. Marie Curie has left her mark on the Periodic Table of Elements: The Curies were the first to isolate radium and polonium, the latter of which is named after her country of birth. A little over a decade after her death (attributed to radiation exposure), she and her husband were honored when the 96th element was named Curium.

Further reading: Nobel Prize Winner Marie Curie

Click images to enlarge.

March 5

The coin: 1878-CC US Morgan Dollar

The woman: Anna Willess Williams

The story: The Morgan Dollar is 140 years old this month, and its story is closely tied to Anna Willess Williams, a young woman from Philadelphia whose portrait appeared on the 657 million Morgans that were minted. The Mint director wanted the dollar to feature the head of a woman to represent Liberty (instead of an entire figure). This was a significant change, because the public was accustomed to the Seated Liberty design on silver coinage, from dollars to half dimes, in the decades before the Morgan Dollar was issued. Coin designer George T. Morgan selected Anna Willess Williams, a young woman from Philadelphia, because of her remarkable profile. Williams was promised that her identity would be kept a secret, but her ties to the Morgan Dollar soon became public. Williams spurned the fame, and instead chose to pursue her career as a teacher.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: Morgan Dollars

Click images to enlarge.

March 4

The coin: 2001 Silver Gibraltar Crown

The woman: Florence Nightingale

The story: Florence Nightingale, an Englishwoman, led a team of nurses who cared for the wounded during the Crimean War, a conflict in the 1850s that involved Great Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and Russia. After the war, Nightingale established a nursing school in London that raised the profile of the nursing profession and expanded the career opportunities for 19th century women. She is depicted on the coin here holding a lamp (symbolic of the care she provided for wounded servicemen at night). Britain honored her contributions by putting her on banknotes in the late 20th century; she was the first woman on British paper money who was not a monarch.

Further reading: Florence Nightingale Biography

Click images to enlarge.

March 3

The coin: 1986 Philippine Gold 2500 Piso Proof (Aquino's Washington Visit)

The woman: Corazon Aquino

The story: Corazon Aquino’s husband, a former senator and critic of the Philippine dictatorship, was assassinated upon returning from exile in 1983. Corazon was the heart of the People Power Movement that toppled this dictatorship in 1986. She became the first female president of an Asian country, serving until 1992. This particular coin celebrates her September 1986 visit to Washington, during which she addressed the US Congress and met with US President Reagan, who is featured on the reverse.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: 1986 Philippines 2500 Piso Proof

Click images to enlarge.

March 2

The coin: 2000-P US Sacagawea Dollar

The woman: Glenna Goodacre

The story: Goodacre won a national design contest with her obverse design for the new coin featuring Sacagawea, the Native American woman who assisted the Lewis and Clark Expedition across the western United States. Amid high expectations, more than a billion were minted in 2000, including 767 million in Philadelphia. (No US dollar coin has had a higher mintage than the 2000 Philadelphia issue.) Goodacre also designed the Vietnam Women's Memorial, located near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Further reading: NGC Coin Explorer: Sacagawea Dollar

Click images to enlarge. (Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions)

March 1

The coin: Ptolemaic Kingdom 80 Drachmae (1st Century B.C.)

The woman: Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt

The story: The last Greek to rule Egypt, Cleopatra, is portrayed on the obverse of

this coin. She was remarkably intelligent, and spoke nine languages. She was also opportunistic, first allying herself with the Roman general Julius Caesar and later with Roman general Marc Antony, whom she married. Antony and Cleopatra's forces suffered a disastrous defeat in 31 B.C. at the Battle of Actium; less than a year later, as their grip on power was failing, Cleopatra killed herself at age 39, just days after Antony had done the same.

Further reading: Famous Romans You Can Collect

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Modern Chinese Varieties: 1985 Silver 5Y Proof

Posted on 3/13/2018

This is the 38th installment of our monthly column devoted to modern Chinese varieties.

This month we will feature a Silver 5Y Proof variety. In 1985 China issued the second series of Historical People. Included in this five-coin series (one being gold) is a silver coin honoring Chen Sheng and Wu Guang. This coin can be found with Chen Sheng having either a “short cape” or “long cape” on the reverse of the coin.

The first variety (pictured below) is an example featuring a “short cape” **(Photo 1)**. The red arrow points to where the short part of the cape is.

Photo 1 - Reverse with "short cape"
Click image to enlarge.

The second variety (pictured below) is an example featuring a “long cape” **(Photo 2)**. The red arrow points to where the long part of the cape is.

Photo 2 - Reverse with "long cape"
Click image to enlarge.

Both of these varieties share the same common obverse featuring the date 1985 **(Photo 3)**.

Photo 3 - Obverse of a 1985 Silver 5Y Proof coin honoring Chen Sheng and Wu Guang
Click image to enlarge.

Look for another interesting variety to be featured next month.

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United States

NGC Registry: Two New Categories and 22 New Set Types

Posted on 3/13/2018

The 2018 US Proof sets and coins were added this month!

Twenty-two new sets are now available in the competitive NGC Registry. Two new sets offered this month include the 2018 Proof Sets for the 2018 US Proof coinage. It is never too early to start planning for the 2018 Registry awards. We appreciate the set requests and look forward to receiving more coin collecting ideas from you in the coming weeks. Your feedback is important to us. Here are the latest updates, below:

New categories:

- Burkina Faso
- Montenegro

New sets:

- US: Proof Sets 1999-Date: 2018 Clad Proof Set Coinage
- US: Proof Sets 1999-Date: 2018 Silver Proof Set Coinage
- Australia-Commemorative: Silver $1, 2010, Proof
- Burkina-Faso: Silver 1000 Francs, 2014-Date, Proof
- Cook Islands: Silver $20, 2015 - Date, Mint State

2016 Silver $20 St. Peter's Basilica – High Relief

2017 Silver $20 Lucky Panda

- Estonia: 2 Euros, 2011-Date, Mint State & Proof
- France - 1870-Date: Gold 500 Francs, 31g, 1993-Date, Proof
- France - 1870-Date: Gold 500 Francs, 1986-Date, Proof
- Great Britain - Proof Sets: 2014 Silver Commemorative Proof Set
- India - Princely States: Hyderabad, Rupee, AH1319//35 - AH1329//44, Circulation Issue
- India-Republic: 10 Rupees, 1974-Date, Circulation Issue
- India-Republic: Silver 10 Rupees, 1969-1973, Circulation Issue
- India-Republic: Silver 50 Rupees, 1974-Date, Circulation Issue
- India-Republic: Silver 100 Rupees, 1980-Date, Circulation Issue
- Montenegro: Standard Coinage, Type Set, 1906-1914, Circulation Issue
- Peru: Republic Transitional Coinage Silver Type Set, 1858-1861, Circulation Issue
- Peru: Peseta Coinage Type Set, 1880-1882, Circulation Issue
- Peru: Provisional Coinage, 1879-1880, Complete Circulation Issue
- Peru: Silver 1/2 Sol, 1907-1917, Circulation Issue

- Peru: Silver 1/2 Sol, 1922-1935, Circulation Issue
- Tuvalu: Silver Dollars, Lunar Series, 2013-2024, Proof, Including Varieties
- Tuvalu: Silver Dollars, 2018-Date, Proof

Do you have an NGC-certified coin in your hand and you're not sure where it may fit in the NGC Registry? We are here to help with requests and with any other questions you may have. Feel free to send us an email and let us know how we can help. Reach us easily via email at registry@NGCcoin.com.

If you're not familiar with the NGC Registry, take some time to explore it and see the many collecting options that are available. It is completely complimentary. If you have any questions, you may also click below for our help page:

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NGC Ancients: Coins of the Romano-Gallic Empire

Posted on 3/13/2018

Although many coins were issued in the Romano-Gallic Empire, the billon double-denarius is the one collectors encounter most often.

The late 3rd Century A.D. was one of the most difficult periods in Rome's long history. In 260 the Roman Empire was unraveling at both ends: in the East the emperor Valerian I (253 to 260) had been taken hostage by the Sasanians, and the West had succumbed to the revolt of a Roman governor in Germany named M. Cassianius Latinius Postumus (A.D. 260 to 269).

The central government was so overwhelmed with its own concerns that it turned a blind eye to the needs of its westernmost territories – modern-day Britain, Spain, France, Germany (and neighboring nations).

When the emperors Valerian I and his son Gallienus (253 to 268) had come to power in 253, they faced multiple crises, which caused Gallienus to remain in Europe and Valerian to lead an army to Asia. Both fought tirelessly on their own fronts. However, when Valerian's army was so disabled by plague in 260 that the emperor was taken captive by the Sasanians, Gallienus was on his own.

Double-Denarius of Valerian I

Double-Denarius of Gallienus

As the East descended into chaos, the West also was spun out of control, leaving regional governors and commanders to fend for themselves. It was in this chaotic environment that Postumus' rebellion took place.

Double-Denarius of Postumus

Double-Denarius of Postumus

Postumus ruled his 'separatist' empire, the Romano-Gallic Empire, with much success considering his limited resources and the threats he faced on all sides, from both Romans and barbarians. In all, nearly fifteen years elapsed before the

empire Postumus created was reclaimed by the Roman government in the spring of 274.

A great many coins were issued in the Romano-Gallic Empire. Although gold and silver coins were struck, the only ones commonly available are the billon double-denarii (antoniniani) of its four longest-reigning emperors and, under Postumus, base metal coins, such as the ‘double sestertius’ pictured below.

‘Double-Sestertius’ of Postumus

Seemingly in 267 or 268, near the end of the reigns of both Postumus and Gallienus, Postumus forged an alliance with Aureolus, Gallienus’ cavalry commander at Milan, in northern Italy. While Gallienus was fighting Goths in Greece, Aureolus revolted against his emperor, in the process striking coins in the name of his new ally, Postumus.

Double-Denarius issued by Aureolus in the name of Postumus

Aureolus’ coins are different from all other issues of Postumus in thier style and fabric, their use of mint officina marks, and their unusual reverse inscriptions (which typically end AEQVIT, EQVIT or EQVITVM). They are easily distinguished from Postumus’ own issues, and can be securely attributed to the mint of Milan.

The revolt in Milan was quickly put down, but in the process Gallienus was murdered in a coup, and was replaced as emperor by his cavalry commander Claudius II ‘Gothicus’ (268 to 270).

Double-Denarius of Claudius II ‘Gothicus’

In the first half of the following year, 269, new troubles were brewing for Postumus in the West. A Spaniard named Laelianus, then a governor in Germany, raised a rebellion in the city of Mainz.

Double-Denarius of Laelianus

Laelianus’ revolt was short-lived, and seemingly was put down by Postumus without too much difficulty. The usurper’s coins are reasonably rare, and they bear a distinctive portrait with a long, pointed beard.

Even with his success against Laelianus, Postumus’ regime still was not secure, and soon afterward he was murdered by his soldiers. In the aftermath, a soldier names Marius (who is said to have been a blacksmith) was hailed emperor by dissatisfied soldiers in the summer or fall of 269.

Double-Denarius of Marius

Marius’ reign also was brief. His coins are scarce, yet enough survive that historians believe his reign probably lasted about three months. In the aftermath of Marius’ bid for power, a man of greater qualification came forth: Victorinus (269 to 271), the tribune of the guards at Trier and formerly a consul in the Romano-Gallic senate.

Double-Denarius of Victorinus

Victorinus was hailed emperor and ruled for two years during troubled times as the central empire gained steam in its bid to reclaim the West. Even so, the central Roman government was occupied with many difficulties of its own – not the least of which was the death of the emperor Claudius II ‘Gothicus’ by plague in 270.

Claudius II was replaced by his brother Quintillus – an unfortunate emperor who reigned just two or three months late in 270 before he fell victim to a rebellion by Rome’s next emperor, the cavalry commander Aurelian (270 to 275).

Double-Denarius of Quintillus

Double-Denarius of Aurelian

Within his own realm, Victorinus also suffered a disturbing event – a rebellion by a man named Domitianus, who as a contender for the Romano-Gallic throne is attested only by coinage. At present, just two of his billon double-denarii are known.

Though Victorinus or his soldiers must have defeated Domitianus rapidly, the political environment was charged, and Victorinus was murdered in Cologne sometime in 271, apparently for having made one too many advances on his officers' wives.

The governor of Aquitania, Tetricus I (271 to 274), was hailed then emperor in his place. Though he ruled longer than his predecessor, Tetricus I was destined to be the last Romano-Gallic emperor.

Double-Denarius of Tetricus I

Soon after being crowned, Tetricus I raised his young son, Tetricus II, to the subordinate rank of Caesar, and issued large quantities of coins in his name.

Double-Denarius of Tetricus II as Caesar

The vast majority of the young Caesar's coins describe him as holding the rank of Caesar. However, some very rare pieces pair Tetricus II’s distinctive, youthful portrait with the title of Augustus, suggesting – perhaps – that late in his father’s reign, in 274, he was raised from Caesar to Augustus.

However, the barbarous quality of these pieces cast doubt upon their officiality. For example, the peculiar style and fabric to the two pieces pictured below - one perhaps official, the other unofficial - are comparable.

Possibly barbarous Double-Denarius of Tetricus II as Augustus

Barbarous Double-Denarius of Tetricus II as Caesar

Though a variety of military, social and economic forces conspired in the early 270s to bring an end to the Romano-Gallic Empire, the fact that Rome now had a capable, energetic, and fortunate emperor – Aurelian – only hastened matters.

By late 272, Aurelian had recovered Rome's lost territories in the East from the usurpers Zenobia and Vabalathus (267 to 272), who ruled from the desert-oasis of Palmyra. Then, he traversed the length of his empire, from Palmyra to Gaul, to commence his invasion of the West.

Double-Denarius of Zenobia

Double-Denarius of Vabalathus

Aurelian’s offensive was successful, ending in the spring of 274 with a pitched battle at Châlons-sur-Marne, at which Aurelian’s army won the day. Though it was a significant conflict, many historians believe that Tetricus I, realizing there no longer was any point in resisting the central empire, had intended to surrender.

Regardless of how the outcome was achieved, Aurelian succeeded in uniting a Roman Empire that for the previous fifteen years had been fractured. Upon returning to Rome, Aurelian held a glorious triumph in which Zenobia, Vabalathus, Tetricus I and Tetricus II were paraded before euphoric citizens who lined the streets of Rome.

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Images courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group.

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Counterfeit Detection: 1876-CC 20 Cent Piece

Posted on 3/13/2018

This counterfeit of an unusual denomination shows plenty of clues that it isn't worth a fortune.

The 20 cent piece was an American coin produced only from 1875 to 1878. Like the Seated Liberty quarter, it was struck in .900 fine silver, featured the Seated Liberty obverse and was nearly the same diameter. These similarities confused the public and resulted in a quick end for the 20-piece.

In fact, the only 20 cent pieces intended for circulation were produced with dates of 1875 (when they were produced at Carson City, Philadelphia and San Francisco) and 1876 (when they were produced at Carson City and Philadelphia). Mint State specimens can be acquired for several hundred to several thousand dollars for all five of these date and mintmark combinations except for the 1876-CC.

NGC recently identified a counterfeit of the extremely rare 1876-CC 20 Cent Piece.

Counterfeit 1876-CC 20-Cent Piece
Click images to enlarge.

When the order was given in 1876 to halt production and destroy existing 20 cent pieces, the Carson City Mint still had nearly its entire mintage of 10,000 on hand. Today, only about two dozen of these coins are known to exist. Consequently, genuine 1876-CC specimens generally sell for six figures when offered at auction.

This is the first indication a collector should tread carefully.

The 1876-CC specimens are also generally found in excellent condition, likely because they were saved by people who understood their enormous numismatic value. The condition of this counterfeit does not match what would be expected.

A genuine 1876-CC 20 Cent Piece. Note the doubling of the word LIBERTY in the shield.
Click images to enlarge.

Furthermore, all 1876-CC pieces were struck with a single pair of dies that produced a doubling on the observe that is clearly evident in the word LIBERTY in the shield. The counterfeit shows no sign of this doubling.

Finally, the poor quality of the details on the counterfeit are a dead giveaway. Such graininess would not be seen on a genuine piece.

Because the 1876 and the 1875-CC are both relatively inexpensive, a counterfeit 1876-CC could be attempted by altering the mintmark or date. Or, a cast could be attempted using the obverse of the 1876 with the reverse of the 1875-CC.

Fortunately, skilled numismatists can identify such counterfeits. Remember, any coin certified by NGC is guaranteed to be authentic.

Did you know? NGC has created a comprehensive Counterfeit Detection resource to help collectors and dealers identify counterfeit and altered coins. Visit NGCcoin.com/counterfeit.

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United States

USA Coin Album: It's the Law! Lesser-known Passages Relating to United States Coinage—Conclusion

Posted on 3/13/2018

As the 20th century dawned, the coinage of the United States was quite stable and met the needs of commerce in a manner previous generations could only have imagined.

Thus, there are far fewer quirks in our coinage laws since that time, yet a few oddities do stand out amid the routine actions of Congress.

When the USA acquired the Philippine Islands by treaty with Spain in 1899, one of the more pressing concerns was a reliable coinage. The existing Spanish issues were denominated in pesos and centavos, and it was decided to continue this familiar money but with completely new designs by Filipino-American artist Melecio Figueroa. The new USA-Philippines peso would be exchangeable with United States currency at the rate of two pesos to the dollar. Due to the very low price of silver at the time this legislation was passed on March 23, 1903, it was possible to coin a silver peso that was equal in size to the USA silver dollar, while being legally worth only half as much. Most collectors assume that these coins were struck on silver dollar planchets, but that's not the case. While similar in size, the USA-Philippines peso was coined to the pre-1837 dollar standard of 416 grains, making it worth more as bullion than a Morgan dollar. This standard lasted just three years, as the price of

silver began to climb almost as soon as the coins were issued, and pesos struck 1907 and later were both smaller and of lower fineness than the 1903-06 pieces.

Most coinage legislation passed during the first half of the 20th century was concerned with commemorative coins or medals and contains no surprises. The Act of April 24, 1906, however, does stand out, as it gave us cents and nickels from the Denver and San Francisco Mints. Previously, these facilities had been limited to coining only gold and silver pieces. New Orleans was likewise authorized to produce minor coins, but it declined to do so prior to termination of coining operations there on July 1, 1909. The new law permitted the Director of the Mint, with the approval of the Treasury Secretary, to transfer up to $200,000 to any of the four mints then active for the purpose of purchasing the necessary metals for coining cents and nickels. This was needed, since the mints did not take deposits of base metals for coining, as they did with gold and silver.

A law passed March 4, 1909 made it illegal not only to counterfeit United States coins but also foreign coins. It even went so far as to forbid the making of any coin-like object of original design. It's clear from the language used that makers of tokens were skating on thin ice, but it seems that most jurisdictions elected to let this activity slide, as long as no such pieces were used outside of the establishments that created them.

Making or passing counterfeit USA coins was punishable by a fine of up to $3,000, a prison term of up to five years, or both. Making dies or hubs for such purpose would result in a fine of up to $5,000 and imprisonment of up to ten years. The same activity, when directed at foreign coins, warranted a fine of up to $2,000, imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

The last act of legislation that I'll address pertains to one our most popular coin series—the Morgan dollar. The Pittman Act of April 23, 1918 is well known to numismatists, as it led to the destruction of more than 270 million silver dollars

held by the Treasury. While some of this silver was earmarked for recoining into fractional silver pieces, such action never occurred, and that clause in the legislation was terminated on November 29, 1922. By far the greatest amount of bullion, a total of 259,121,554 silver dollars' worth, was sold to the Britain so that it would have enough of the metal to back all of its council bills, the primary currency in India. During World War I, a desperate Germany had attempted to incite rebellion in India by spreading rumors that these notes could not be fully redeemed. Unable to come up with sufficient silver to disprove the rumors, Britain had been forced to begin redeeming council bills in gold, a ruinous path that required relief from its wartime ally, the USA.

All of this seems quite reasonable and ordinary, yet the legislation contains some curious language that betrays the great urgency for immediate relief. The Treasury Secretary was therein authorized "to melt or break up" the silver dollars. Breaking up was the process of flattening the coins in a rolling press, which effectively demonetized them far more quickly than could be achieved by melting. In this form, they were shipped to Britain as "diamond-shaped plates," according to Treasury Secretary Carter Glass. Only when the immediate crisis had passed was the Treasury able to begin melting coins to destroy them completely. Sales of American silver to Britain lasted as late as May of 1919, yet the melting of silver dollars continued through much of that year.

David W. Lange's column, "USA Coin Album," appears monthly in The Numismatist, *the official publication of the American Numismatic Association.*

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Chinese Coins: A Day at the Opera

Posted by Peter Anthony on 3/13/2018

Chinese opera-themed gold and silver coins and medals are quite striking and feature various scenes and characters.

When most people think about Chinese opera, they think about the Peking Opera. That's not a surprise; it's the most famous and well-known kind. To catch a Peking Opera performance on the same Royal stage that emperors did, just hop Beijing subway line 4 out to the Summer Palace.

The Summer Palace itself reminds me of a stage set. In Qing Dynasty times, a court visitor would first stand before the magnificent entrance gate. From there he, or she, would look up at the towering halls and temples on Longevity Hill's steep slope. If you want to feel small, stand on that spot.

It was on September 25, 1790 that performers from Anhui Province first brought what would be called Peking Opera to the capital. On his 80th birthday, they delighted the Qianlong Emperor with a novel mixture of speech, singing, dance and martial arts movements. Thereafter, any imperial celebration needed to include this new style of entertainment.

If you saw "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," then you have seen the influence of Chinese opera. It demands the highest level of craft from the performers (who until the 1870s were always men). Part of the famous film "Farewell My Concubine" explores the seven years of barely endurable training required for Peking Opera work and its place in a changed world.

In the late nineteenth century, the Empress Dowager Cixi became an avid operatic fan. It was for her that the exquisite three-story Great Stage in the Summer Palace was built. The Great Stage is considered the "Cradle of Peking Opera." It is still in use today and attracts hordes of visitors, including an NGC

consultant.

An electronic scoreboard at one entrance to the Summer Palace tracks the day's attendance. On a warm, sunny Sunday the orange numbers cross the 50,000 mark. Where is everybody? Everywhere, including the Great Stage. My friends and I discover this when we arrive late for a public performance there.

The sounds float across the courtyard as we step over the doorsill into the Garden of Virtue and Harmony (Dehe Yuan). Bleacher-style seats face the stage, but these are overflowing. Even standing room is hard to find. At last we slip into an open spot off to the side and up the steps to the official (and closed) boxes. These boxes, or rooms, were originally reserved for the noble guests of the Empress.

The costumes and movements of the operas follow conventions that help guide the audience through the plot. The costumes and masks are especially striking — which is just what China Gold Coin Inc. (also called CGCI, or the China Mint) did. It struck sets of Peking Opera gold and silver coins from 1999 to 2002.

The sets each contain a round ½ oz. gold, a rectangular 5 oz. silver and four one oz. silver coins. The obverse (date) face portrays the Grand Stage in the Summer Palace. The reverses feature various scenes and characters. The 1999 50 Yuan gold coin is the most valuable coin in the set. Condition is usually not a problem; more than 90% of those graded achieved an NGC PF 69 or PF 70 level.

In 2008, a Peking Opera design coin was part of the third set of silver coins for the 2008 Olympics in China. Two years later, in 2010, a new series of colored Peking Opera mask sets was launched. This set has a ¼ oz. gold coin and two 1 oz. silver coins. Like the earlier Peking Opera series, this one lasted for three years. As is typical of more recent Chinese coins, the coins grade quite well. For instance, the gold 100 Yuan Bao Zheng mask of 2010 is more than 90% NGC PF 69 and PF 70. Getting a PF 70 is not a sure thing, though; PF 69s are nearly twice as plentiful as PF 70s.

Is that all there is to Chinese opera and numismatics? Not by a long shot. With all the attention Peking Opera gets, few foreigners realize that it is only one of many styles of Chinese Opera. Among them are Huangmei and Kunqu.

Huangmei is an operatic form rooted in folk music. Long ago, as women harvested tea in the fields, they would sing. During the late Qing Dynasty, their melodies were collected and merged with dance and traditional operas. The production was called the "Caicha," or "Picking Tea Songs." It grew to be quite popular.

Last year, the Shenzhen Guobao Mint produced a charming set of Huangmei Opera coins. It includes a 3 gram gold coin plus one 150 gram and two 15 gram silver coins. The color designs capture the original folksy charm of these operas. It's worth noting that, like other colored coins, these were struck on bare metal and the color added in a separate process afterward.

A 2013 copper Chinese opera medal by Shenyang Mint artist Chang Huan.
In the background is the Great Stage in Beijing, "The Cradle of Peking Opera."

There are also opera medals. One example is by the outstanding Shenyang Mint artist Chang Huan. It is called "Kunqu Opera." The obverse illustrates a moment from the "Peony Pavilion," a famous fiction work from the Ming Dynasty. This medal is not expensive, but it's valuable for its beauty and artistic spirit. That is something to sing about!

Peter Anthony is an expert on Chinese modern coins with a particular focus on Panda coins. He is an analyst for the NGC Chinese Modern Coin Price Guide as well as a consultant on Chinese modern coins.

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United States

NCS Conservation: March Highlights

Posted on 3/13/2018

This month's conservation highlights feature coins with residues.

Numismatic Conservation Services (NCS) uses a variety of proprietary techniques to remove harmful surface contaminants, stabilize and protect a coin's surfaces and, in many cases, improve a coin's eye appeal. After coins are conserved by NCS, they are seamlessly transferred to Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), an independent affiliate of NCS, for grading and encapsulation.

Below are a few highlights of coins that were conserved by NCS and graded by NGC recently.

This 1868 Shield Nickel was submitted for NCS conservation with a terrible case of green residues hiding the original surfaces. Green residues such as this are often a sign of PVC residue development. Left unchecked, PVC residues can permanently damage the surface of a coin. The green residues were able to be removed to reveal only minimal effect on the coin. Following conservation, this uncirculated shield nickel was able to grade well with NGC.

1868 Shield Nickel

Before conservation
Click images to enlarge.

1868 Shield Nickel
After conservation
Click images to enlarge.

This Proof 1909 Kiau Chau nickel 5 Cent came into NCS for removal of some spotty yellowish residues and discoloration. Nickel coins require special care in their conservation primarily due to a high percentage of other metals in their alloy. Taking this concern into consideration is a requirement in conserving this rare piece from a German trading enclave in China. After successful removal of the residues and discoloration, this coin was able to grade numerically with NGC.

1909 Kiau Chau Proof Nickel 5 Cent
Before conservation
Click images to enlarge.

1909 Kiau Chau Proof Nickel 5 Cent
After conservation
Click images to enlarge.

This beautifully designed nickel 1926 Albania ¼ Leku came to NCS in need of help to remove the thick layer of yellowish residue obscuring the original surface fairly uniformly. This yellowish residue likely formed from years of less-than-ideal storage. Careful conservation work was able to remove the thick layers of residue and leave a coin with bright surfaces to grade with NGC.

Albania 1926 ¼ Leku
Before conservation
Click images to enlarge.

Albania 1926 ¼ Leku
After conservation
Click images to enlarge.

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From the NGC Archives: 1881 Three Dollar Piece

Posted on 3/13/2018

In a classic example of government inertia, the three dollar piece continued to be coined as late as 1889, long after it had proved unnecessary.

Mintages dwindled after the first year or two of production, and just token numbers were being struck by the 1860s. These figures increased only twice: in 1874, when it seemed that paper money was about to achieve parity with gold coins; and in 1878, when the notes finally did become worth their equivalent in gold.

Click images to enlarge.

The 1881 three dollar piece is an especially important coin in this series, as it has the lowest mintage of any issue struck for circulation. A mere 500 pieces were coined, exclusive of the 54 proofs. In his book on this series, David Akers noted that all of the currency strikes seen by him were prooflike, and indeed so is this one. Its strike is equal to that of a proof and the fields of this coin, though lightly hairlined, are quite deeply brilliant. An attractive coin, as well as a standout rarity, this specimen is a real prize.

Are you interested in learning more about these coins? Click here to visit the NGC Coin Explorer and read on.

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